

savings in energy costs, byproducts, and green tags. Incentives to be considered must accrue from government entities.

(7) *Equipment procurement.* Describe the availability of the equipment required by the system. The description must support that the required equipment is available and can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule.

(8) *Equipment installation.* Describe the plan for site development and system installation, including any special equipment requirements. In all cases, the system or improvement must be installed in conformance with manufacturer's specifications and design requirements, and comply with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.

(9) *Operations and maintenance.* Describe the operations and maintenance requirements of the system, including major rebuilds and component replacements necessary for the system to operate as designed over the design life. All systems or improvements must have a warranty. The warranty must cover and provide protection against both breakdown and a degradation of performance. The performance of the renewable energy system or energy efficiency improvement must be monitored and recorded as appropriate to the specific technology.

(10) *Dismantling and disposal of project components.* Describe a plan for dismantling and disposing of project components and associated wastes at the end of their useful lives. The budget for and any unique concerns associated with the dismantling and disposal of project components and their wastes must also be described.

(8) *Business-level feasibility study for renewable energy systems.* For each application for a renewable energy system project, with total eligible project costs greater than \$200,000, a business-level feasibility study by an independent, qualified consultant will be required by the Agency for start-up businesses or existing businesses. An acceptable business-level feasibility study must at least include an evaluation of economic, market, technical, financial, and management feasibility.

§ 4280.112 Evaluation of grant applications.

(a) *General review.* The Agency will evaluate each application and make a determination as to whether the applicant is eligible, the proposed grant is for an eligible project, and the proposed grant complies with all applicable statutes and regulations.

(b) *Ineligible applications.* If either the applicant or the project is ineligible, the Agency will inform the applicant in writing of the decision, reasons therefore, and any appeal rights. No further evaluation of the application will occur.

(c) *Incomplete applications.* If the application is incomplete, the Agency will return it to the applicant to provide the applicant the opportunity to resubmit the application. The Agency will identify those parts of the application that are incomplete. Upon receipt of a complete application, the Agency will complete its evaluation of the application.

(d) *Technical merit.* The Agency's determination of a project's technical merit will be based on the information provided by the applicant. The Agency may engage the services of other government agencies or other recognized industry experts in the applicable technology field, at its discretion, to evaluate and rate the application. The Agency may use this evaluation and rating to determine the level of technical merit of the proposed project. Projects that the Agency determines are without technical merit shall be deemed ineligible.

(e) *Evaluation criteria.* Agency personnel will score and fund each application based on the evaluation criteria specified in paragraphs (e)(1) through (9) of this section.

(1) *Quantity of energy replaced, produced, or saved.* Points may only be awarded for energy replacement, energy savings, or energy generation. Points will not be awarded for more than one category.

(i) *Energy replacement.* If the proposed renewable energy system is intended primarily for self-use by the agricultural producer or rural small business and will provide energy replacement of greater than zero, but equal to or less

than 25 percent, 5 points will be awarded; greater than 25 percent, but equal to or less than 50 percent, 10 points will be awarded; or greater than 50 percent, 15 points will be awarded. Energy replacement is to be determined by dividing the estimated quantity of renewable energy to be generated over a 12-month period by the estimated quantity of energy consumed over the same 12-month period during the previous year by the applicable energy application. The estimated quantities of energy must be converted to either British thermal units (BTUs), Watts, or similar energy equivalents to facilitate scoring. If the estimated energy produced equals more than 150 percent of the energy requirements of the applicable process(es), the project will be scored as an energy generation project.

(ii) *Energy savings.* If the estimated energy expected to be saved by the installation of the energy efficiency improvements will be from 20 percent up to, but not including 30 percent, 5 points will be awarded; 30 percent up to, but not including 35 percent, 10 points will be awarded; or, 35 percent or greater, 15 points will be awarded. Energy savings will be determined by the projections in an energy assessment or audit. Projects with total eligible project costs of \$50,000 or less that opt to obtain a professional energy audit will be awarded an additional 5 points.

(iii) *Energy generation.* If the proposed renewable energy system is intended primarily for production of energy for sale, 10 points will be awarded.

(2) *Environmental benefits.* If the purpose of the proposed system contributes to the environmental goals and objectives of other Federal, State, or local programs, 10 points will be awarded. Points will only be awarded for this paragraph if the applicant is able to provide documentation from an appropriate authority supporting this claim.

(3) *Commercial availability.* If the proposed system or improvement is currently commercially available and replicable, 5 points will be awarded. If the proposed system or improvement is commercially available and replicable and is also provided with a 5-year or longer warranty providing the purchaser protection against system deg-

radation or breakdown or component breakdown, 10 points will be awarded.

(4) *Technical merit score.* The Technical Merit of each project will be determined using the procedures specified in paragraphs (e)(4)(i) and (ii) of this section. The procedures specified in paragraph (e)(4)(i) will be used to score paragraphs (e)(4)(i)(A) through (J) of this section. The final score awarded will be calculated using the procedures described in paragraph (e)(4)(ii) of this section.

(i) *Technical merit.* Each subparagraph has its own maximum possible score and will be scored according to the following criteria: If the description in the subparagraph has no significant weaknesses and exceeds the requirements of the subparagraph, 100 percent of the total possible score for the subparagraph will be awarded. If the description has one or more significant strengths and meets the requirements of the subparagraph, 80 percent of the total possible score will be awarded for the subparagraph. If the description meets the basic requirements of the subparagraph, but also has several weaknesses, 60 percent of the points will be awarded. If the description is lacking in one or more critical aspects, key issues have not been addressed, but the description demonstrates some merit or strengths, 40 percent of the total possible score will be awarded. If the description has serious deficiencies, internal inconsistencies, or is missing information, 20 percent of the total possible score will be awarded. If the description has no merit in this area, 0 percent of the total possible score will be awarded. The total possible points for Technical Merit is 35 points.

(A) *Qualifications of the project team (maximum score of 10 points).* The applicant has described the project team service providers, their professional credentials, and relevant experience. The description supports that the project team service, equipment, and installation providers have the necessary professional credentials, licenses, certifications, or relevant experience to develop the proposed project.

(B) *Agreements and permits (maximum score of 5 points).* The applicant has described the necessary agreements and

permits required for the project and the schedule for securing those agreements and permits.

(C) *Energy or resource assessment (maximum score of 10 points)*. The applicant has described the quality and availability of a suitable renewable resource or an assessment of expected energy savings for the proposed system.

(D) *Design and engineering (maximum score of 30 points)*. The applicant has described the design, engineering, and testing needed for the proposed project. The description supports that the system will be designed, engineered, and tested so as to meet its intended purpose, ensure public safety, and comply with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.

(E) *Project development schedule (maximum score of 5 points)*. The applicant has described the development method, including the key project development activities and the proposed schedule for each activity. The description identifies each significant task, its beginning and end, and its relationship to the time needed to initiate and carry the project through to successful completion. The description addresses grantee or borrower project development cashflow requirements.

(F) *Project economic assessment (maximum score of 20 points)*. The applicant has described the financial performance of the proposed project, including the calculation of simple payback. The description addresses project costs and revenues, such as applicable investment and production incentives, and other information to allow the assessment of the project's cost effectiveness.

(G) *Equipment procurement (maximum score of 5 points)*. The applicant has described the availability of the equipment required by the system. The description supports that the required equipment is available, and can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule.

(H) *Equipment installation (maximum score of 5 points)*. The applicant has described the plan for site development and system installation.

(I) *Operation and maintenance (maximum score of 5 points)*. The applicant has described the operations and main-

tenance requirements of the system necessary for the system to operate as designed over the design life.

(J) *Dismantling and disposal of project components (maximum score of 5 points)*. The applicant has described the requirements for dismantling and disposing of project components at the end of their useful life and associated wastes.

(ii) *Calculation of Technical Merit Score*. To determine the actual points awarded a project for Technical Merit, the following procedure will be used: The score awarded for paragraphs (e)(4)(i)(A) through (J) of this section will be added together and then divided by 100, the maximum possible score, to achieve a percentage. This percentage will then be multiplied by the total possible points of 35 to achieve the points awarded for the proposed project for Technical Merit.

(5) *Readiness*. If the applicant has written commitments from the source(s) confirming commitment of 50 percent up to but not including 75 percent of the matching funds prior to the Agency receiving the complete application, 5 points will be awarded. If the applicant has written commitments from the source(s) confirming commitment of 75 percent up to but not including 100 percent of the matching funds prior to the Agency receiving the complete application, 10 points will be awarded. If the applicant has written commitments from the source(s) of matching funds confirming commitment of 100 percent of the matching funds prior to the Agency receiving the complete application, 15 points will be awarded.

(6) *Small agricultural producer/very small business*. If the applicant is an agricultural producer producing agricultural products with a gross market value of less than \$600,000 in the preceding year, 5 points will be awarded. If the applicant is an agricultural producer producing agricultural products with a gross market value of less than \$200,000 in the preceding year or is a very small business, as defined in §4280.103, 10 points will be awarded.

(7) *Simplified application/low cost projects*. If the applicant is eligible for and uses the simplified application process or the project has total eligible

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project costs of \$200,000 or less, 5 points will be awarded.

(8) *Previous grantees and borrowers.* If an applicant has not been awarded a grant or loan under this program within the 2 previous Federal fiscal years, 5 points will be awarded.

(9) *Return on investment.* If the proposed project will return the cost of the investment in less than 4 years, 10 points will be awarded; 4 years up to but not including 8 years, 4 points will be awarded; or 8 years up to 11 years, 2 point will be awarded.

§ 4280.113 Insurance requirements.

Agency approved insurance coverage must be maintained for the life of the grant unless this requirement is waived or modified by the Agency in writing.

(a) National flood insurance is required in accordance with 7 CFR part 1806, subpart B, of this title, if applicable.

(b) Business interruption insurance is required except for projects with total eligible project costs of \$200,000 or less.

§ 4280.114 Laws that contain other compliance requirements.

(a) *Equal employment opportunity.* For all construction contracts and grants in excess of \$10,000, the contractor must comply with Executive Order 11246, as amended by Executive Order 11375, and as supplemented by applicable Department of Labor regulations (41 CFR part 60). The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the contractor complies with these requirements.

(b) *Equal opportunity and non-discrimination.* The Agency will ensure that equal opportunity and non-discriminatory requirements are met in accordance with the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and 7 CFR 15d, Non-discrimination in Programs and Activities, conducted by USDA. The Agency will not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, or age (provided that the applicant has the capacity to contract); to the fact that all or part of the applicant's income derives from public assistance program; or to the fact that the applicant has in good faith exercised any

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right under the Consumer Credit Protection Act.

(c) *Civil rights compliance.* Recipients of grants must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This may include collection and maintenance of data on the race, sex, and national origin of the recipient's membership/ownership and employees. These data must be available to conduct compliance reviews in accordance with 7 CFR part 1901, subpart E, §1901.204 of this title. Initial reviews will be conducted after Form RD 400-4 is signed and all subsequent reviews every 3 years thereafter for loans. The last review shall occur 3 years after the date of loan closing. Grants will require one subsequent compliance review after the last disbursement of grant funds have been made, and the facility has been in full operation for 90 days.

(d) *Environmental analysis.* Subpart G of part 1940 of this title outlines environmental procedures and requirements for this subpart. Prospective applicants are advised to contact the Agency to determine environmental requirements as soon as practicable after they decide to pursue any form of financial assistance directly or indirectly available through the Agency.

(1) Any required environmental review must be completed by the Agency prior to the Agency obligating any funds.

(2) The applicant will be notified of all specific compliance requirements, including, but not limited to, the publication of public notices, and consultation with State Historic Preservation Offices and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

(3) A site visit by the Agency may be scheduled, if necessary, to determine the scope of the review.

(4) The applicant taking any actions or incurring any obligations during the time of application or application review and processing that would either limit the range of alternatives to be considered or that would have an adverse effect on the environment, such as the initiation of construction, will result in project ineligibility.